

SUPERFUND REGIONAL Ombudsman

DESCRIPTION

An Ombudsman is a government official charged with investigating citizens' complaints and assisting in achieving fair settlements. Each Regional office has an Ombudsman.

Regional Superfund Ombudsmen can independently investigate citizen's concerns and facilitate a resolution to those concerns. Regional Ombudsmen normally help citizens work through the Superfund decision making process and mediate discussions between citizens and Superfund site staff to solve problems associated with site decisions. Ombudsmen also help resolve internal conflicts that may arise among members of the site team. Success depends on the ombudsman's ability to persuade the parties involved to accept the solutions the parties mutually develop. Ombudsmen do not have the authority to make or change decisions made by Superfund staff.

USING THE RESOURCE

WHEN TO USE

The Superfund Regional Ombudsman is a direct point-of-contact for citizens who have talked with Superfund site staff about a problem and are dissatisfied with the solution or treatment received. Although citizens may contact the Ombudsman before discussing their concerns with Superfund staff, the Ombudsman will advise citizens to talk with Superfund site staff. The Ombudsman does not normally answer general Superfund or site-specific questions.

Regional Superfund site staff can request assistance from the Superfund Regional Ombudsman to facilitate or mediate meetings between citizens and site staff. However, the community has a right to arrange for a neutral third-party facilitator/mediator to perform this function.

How to Use

For more information, contact your Regional Superfund Ombudsman or the Hazardous Waste Ombudsman.

Tips

- The Ombudsman can play a positive role in helping citizens through the Superfund decision making process and moving the cleanup process forward;
- Ombudsmen cannot change site decisions;
- Inform your communities about the Superfund Regional Ombudsman program;
- Consider involving the Superfund Regional Ombudsman at contentious sites or when potential conflicts become apparent; and
- Consider using third-party facilitators/mediators if the situation does not warrant the involvement of the Ombudsman.

RELATED TOOLS/RESOURCES IN THE TOOLKIT

- [Community Visioning Process, Tab 9](#)
- [Facilitation/Conflict Resolution, Tab 14](#)
- [Partnering, Tab 28](#)

Last Updated:
April 2003



SUPERFUND REGIONAL OmbudsMAN